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CREATIVE
BOUNTY

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Dear Reader,

In this issue, we are particularly pleased to announce our new literary journal, which will publish poetry and prose from writers based in El Dorado County. The journal was born out of a desire to cultivate a vibrant, cohesive, countywide literary community that includes both the Western Slope of the Sierra Nevada and the Lake Tahoe Basin. We hope that this desire is clearly reflected in the name of the journal: *Slope & Basin*.

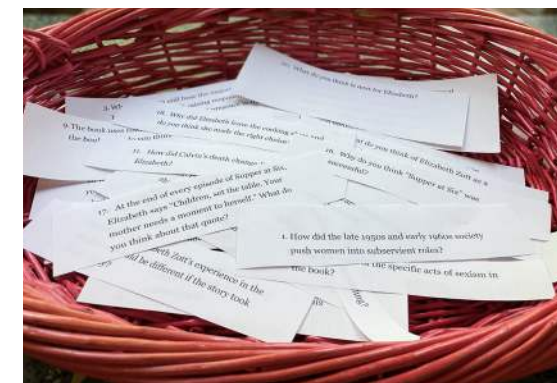
As we thought more about the name, we realized that it seemed to be evocative not just of places and communities, but also of a particular shape, as if it was describing, in the familiar nomenclature of our region's geography, a symbol. The symbol might be, in the end, symbolic of the regions it references or of the journal who bears its name. For others, it might signify something more complex, as complex as our relationship to this place, our home. For still others, it might have many meanings at once, a logogram with a dozen changing definitions. In the pages of *Slope & Basin*, in the conversations that it starts, and in that everyday process of authorship and interpretation called living, our hope is that we will all have a chance to find out what it—this place—means to each of us and to each other.

The other stories in this issue feature residents of El Dorado County who are, in their own way, doing exactly that. Andie Thrans, with *Forest Song*, invites artists and the wider community to explore their connection to wild places and their feelings about wildfires; "Specters on Glass," a new exhibition of portraits taken in Placerville in the early 20th Century, gives the public an opportunity to contemplate Placerville's historic past; an enormous mural on Broadway, commissioned by Wendy Thomas and her mother Judy Puthuff, celebrates our region with a depiction of Gold Rush history and the modern agricultural boom in Apple Hill; and a (very) long-running book club in Placerville offers its members a community within our larger community. And don't miss the very last page, with an invitation for the whole community to celebrate Arts and Culture El Dorado's 40th Anniversary. If you enjoy ARTS 99, if you admire the work we are doing with veterans, students, and artists, if you believe in building a strong foundation for culture to thrive, then please join us on November 7th!

Thank you for your support.



Back row (L to R): Jeannie Butcher, Liz Jordan, Sharron Whittaker, Wendy Haagenson, Ann Clark, Judy Webb, Nina White. Front row (L to R): Vicki Kennedy, Joy Fausel, Cathy Garrett.



Twenty Years of Stories

In Placerville, home to many rich histories, there are still some nuggets of Gold Country history yet to be discovered—in this case, a nugget of history-in-the-making: a book club, which began in the library of Markham Elementary School, that has been running for 20 years. Vicki Kennedy, who hosted the book club's most recent meeting, was there when it began in 2004. "The librarian at Markham decided to have a tea and read a book with kids who were higher need or who didn't have much support at home. All of us teachers who could do it read a book with one of those students." Their first book was "The Secret Life of Bees", by Sue Monk Kidd. Vicki polished her set of fine silverware (for the first and last time) and brought it to the library so the students could experience real silver service as they drank their tea and discussed the book.

The teachers who were involved in that first year continued to meet—for the next 20 years, and

counting. There are now 18 members of the book club, almost all of whom were employees of the Placerville Union School District. From 2004 to 2024, the group has read 206 books. Along the way, they've had a number of memorable opportunities to meet the authors of books they've read. Karen Kondazian, author of "The Whip", a novel about the Old West, took a stage coach from her hotel to the Placerville library for her reading; Marcus Samuelson, author of "Yes, Chef", invited the group to his restaurant in New York City after they sent him their thoughts on his book.

Their book club may be significantly longer-running than most, but like any book club, it isn't just about the books. "A book club gives you purpose, and goals, which I think keeps you young," Vicki explains. "And we have been together through so much. Illnesses, deaths, even going through Covid—we have been a support system for each other."

EDITOR Jordan Hyatt-Miller

DESIGNER Dan Keenan

PRINTER Minuteman Press



In the Wake of Wildfire

El Dorado County, like much of California, has been devastated in recent years by wildfires whose frequency and catastrophic severity only seems to be increasing. The devastation isn't just physical—there is an emotional toll, a shared trauma, for those affected by wildfires. There is a word for that feeling: solastalgia, defined as the emotional distress caused by environmental change. Solastalgia exists on the flipside of biophilia, defined as the joy that is derived from experiences with nature. These two concepts are at the center of *ForestSong*, a countywide collaborative art project whose aim is to help us heal in the wake of wildfire.

ForestSong is an outgrowth of lead artist Andie Thrams' personal creative practice. Andie, a visual artist whose work weaves together the sacred and the scientific, has long explored wild places and the feelings they evoke in her artwork; in the past, her work often took the form of a visual representation of biophilia, but she found herself increasingly affected by the destruction of the wild places that were so integral to both her work and her wellbeing. Andie began to compose explorations of solastalgia using materials gathered from charred forests, bearing witness to burn scars and processing her feelings through

her art. "The healing impact was almost immediate," explains Andie. "The takeaway for me was how empowering it can be to experience all our emotions, the dark and the light." With *ForestSong*, Andie is inviting the community to share in her creative process, and to heal as she has.

ForestSong is one of several El Dorado County-based projects supported by the California Creatives Corps, an initiative of the California Arts Council that provides funding directly to arts organizations for work that creates awareness around one of several themes: public health; water and energy conservation and climate mitigation, emergency preparedness relief, and recovery; civic engagement; and social justice. *ForestSong* has received additional support from the Sacramento Office of Arts and Culture and Arts and Culture El Dorado.

As *ForestSong* grew from the germ of Andie's creative practice, it began to branch in new directions, becoming a collaborative, multimedia art project. At *ForestSong* events, Andie is joined by visual artist Laurel Ferreira, who helps share the painting process with participants, while poet Moira Magneson helps participants express themselves through poetry.

ForestSong events also feature sound art generated from data related to California wildfires by Zack Dowell and Dustin Koupal of the Laika's Last Wish performance collective. In addition, graphic artist Nate Reifke is developing informational materials for the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council.

An exhibition in Arts and Culture El Dorado's Switchboard Gallery in July and August featured everything that has grown from *ForestSong* events so far: eight giant hand-painted forest prayer flags from Andie Thrams; eight additional giant prayer flags painted by the community at events in Markleeville, South Lake Tahoe, Georgetown, and Wakamatsu Farm; 70 smaller flags, each hand-painted by Andie Thrams and Laurel Ferreira, featuring original poetry from community members creates with the help of Moira Magneson at each event; and a piece of sound art entitled "Burn Scar" from Laika's Last Wish, which evolves with each event.

ForestSong will feature two more events at which the community will be able to read and write poetry, paint on giant prayer flags, and learn actionable steps to preserve, protect, and celebrate our natural wonders.

Upcoming Events:

Sunday, September 22, 12 pm to 4 pm
Pioneer Park, 6740 Fairplay Road,
Somerset, CA.

Sunday, September 29, 1 pm to 5 pm,
Camp Lotus, 5461 Bassi Road,
Lotus, CA.

Find more information at www.andiethrams.com/forestsong-events-and-more



Mural On Broadway: Cultural Catalyst

For El Dorado County District 3 Supervisor Wendy Thomas and her mother, Judy Puthuff, a dream kept alive for almost two decades has finally been realized: an enormous mural, visible both from Broadway and Highway 50, depicting Placerville's past and present, from the Gold Rush to the agricultural boom in nearby Apple Hill.



Judy Puthuff, Wendy Thomas, and Julie Engelmann



The idea for the mural was first conceived in 2007, but for passersby on Broadway, the scene it depicts unfolded before their eyes quite suddenly, in just a few weeks of work from artist Julie Engelmann. Wendy and Judy wanted it that way: “My mother and I are both artists, so it was very important for us to give a beautiful work of art to our community,” Wendy explains. “We didn’t put the image out there ahead of time, because just like the discovery of gold led to the evolution of Placerville, we wanted people to discover this mural as it was evolving and to experience and celebrate the creative process.”

The journey to the completed mural began with a series of community initiatives in 2007, including surveys, consultations with experts, and meetings with Broadway business owners, centering around strategies to beautify Broadway. “The theme that emerged was that we should celebrate our agriculture—we always say that agriculture is our culture in El Dorado County,” Wendy recalls. “We saw that public art would be a catalyst for improvements to Broadway. Art elevates, art inspires, and art creates, defines, and enhances a sense of place, more than anything else.” And where some saw an eyesore in a hulking PG&E substation on Broadway, Wendy and Judy saw “a huge opportunity—a blank canvas for something spectacular.”

Former Mayor Mark Acuna and Brandon Sanders, a government liaison with PG&E, worked tirelessly alongside Wendy and Judy to secure one wall of the substation for the mural project. The mural had a theme and a canvas; now all it needed was an artist.

Judy discovered Julie Engelmann, whose Instagram handle is @artbyjul_, when she drove past a

mural Julie had painted in Half Moon Bay, where Julie lives. The mural was commissioned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Half Moon Bay’s Pumpkin Festival; it was not just the superior artistry that captured Judy’s attention, but the themes of history and agriculture. “We just thought, “That’s exactly what we want, but for El Dorado County.”

“I got into art originally through traditional canvases, but I started experimenting with other surfaces,” Julie says. “I’m a big surfer, so I started painting on surfboards and other non-traditional surfaces... That was my segue into murals.” The corrugated wall of the PG&E substation was yet another new surface for Julie: “It’s an interesting challenge, because every angle and line has to be so exact, but I think it adds a really cool effect and a really unique flair, especially to the background.”

Julie has already seen the impact of her mural on the community. “I have seen how it inspires people firsthand. I calculated that about every ten minutes someone comes up to say that they love it... I have heard several people say that it has inspired them to get back into art,” Julie recounts. “I am a huge advocate for art being more accessible to people. This mural is accessible to everyone, and at such a large scale they can see it from far away, from highways and roads... I think it touches the community in a positive way.”

For Wendy and Judy, making a positive impact on their community is a reward in itself. “Our family goes back eight generations in El Dorado County,” Wendy explains. “We’ve spent our entire lives caring about and serving this community, and we saw this as part of a generational blessing—a way for us to do our part.”



The Lives They Led

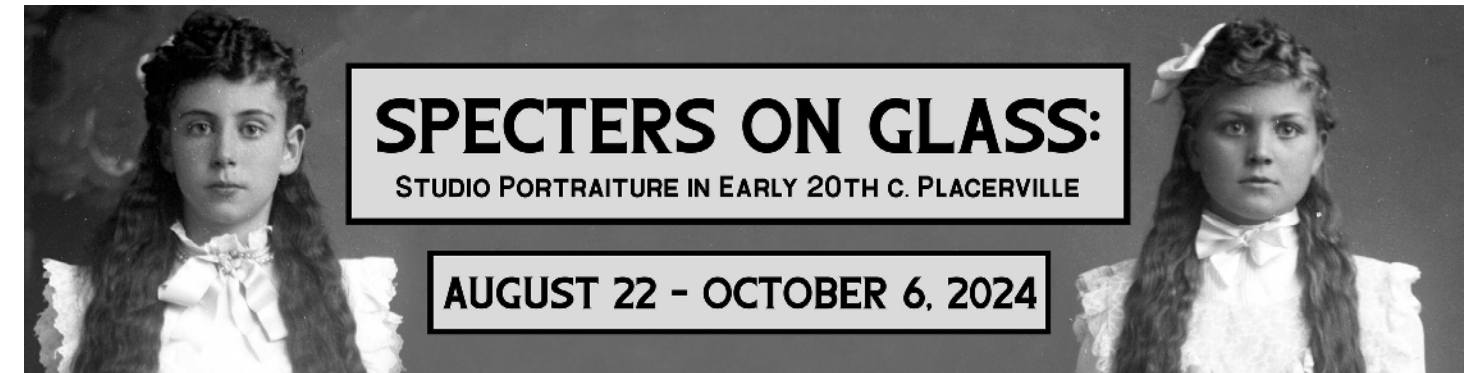
By Garrett Ramos, Literary Assistant at Arts and Culture El Dorado

In the dusty attic of the Placerville News Company, behind a false wall, lay a treasure trove of glass negatives. These spectral inversions, discovered in the '90s, are the only remaining forensic trace of an anonymous photographer who once plied their trade in this very building. As we prepare to unveil these haunting images in the upcoming "Specters on Glass" exhibition at the Switchboard Gallery, we invite you to join us in unraveling the mystery of these forgotten lives.

Our first clue: a series of negatives centered on a single man. In one image, he sits proudly at a table, a curious geared contraption before him. A second negative reveals another man (a friend?) and a boy on either side of him, serving then as silent witnesses, now as forever frozen testaments, to his accomplishment.

Marya Osucha, Curator and Special Projects Manager of the Switchboard Gallery, ponders the question: "What is this device? Was he trying to patent it? What did it do? Who are these guys around him?" The plot thickens as researchers working alongside Marya unearth a surprising detail: our inventor had a checkered past, having been in and out of jail. But caution is warranted - this investigation is ongoing, and our mental model of the man may yet evolve.

As we delve deeper into the collection, more clues emerge. Some negatives capture man's best friend - who says dogs can't haunt? Others chronicle the lives of diverse people, representing starkly what often seems vaguely unreal: aging. A pair among still other negatives features a gentleman in two guises: work clothes in one, a suit in the other. Is this an experiment in self-presentation?



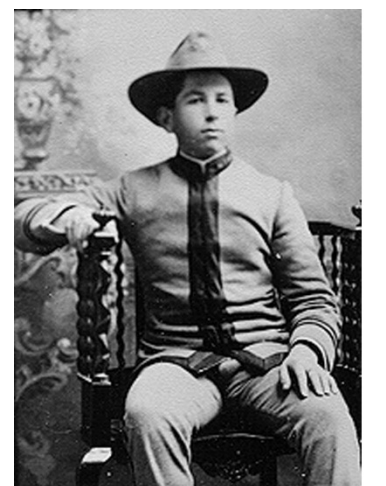
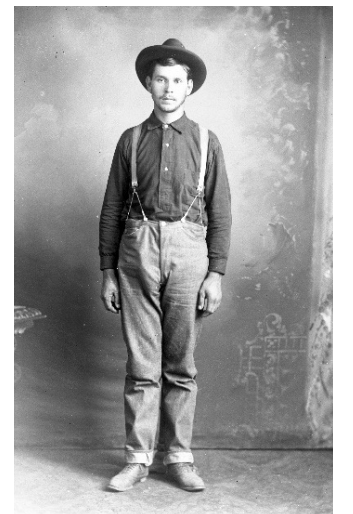
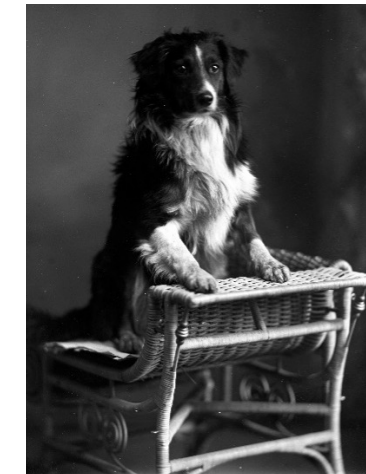
"What is he trying to say about himself?" Marya wonders. This work in particular jars with that of a documentarian, capturing candid moments of town life. It suggests, rather, a photographer hired to immortalize a considered facet of the jewel of self-expression - whether of individuals, children, or families.

Produced some twenty years after the Census Bureau declared the Western frontier of the contiguous states closed in 1890, these shadowy inversions serve as portals onto the apparently normal lives of Placervillians. Then, beyond questions of identity, they invite another: how wild was the "Wild West" really?

As we piece together the clues, a different picture of Placerville's social fabric emerges. The negatives whisper of a reality far removed from the "mythologized" view of the Western US frontier that many of us have absorbed through Hollywood's stretchy celluloid. Consider that only after the frontier's official closing did the 'Wild West' moniker take hold, lassoed into popular imagination by showmen like Buffalo Bill and eventually cemented by Hollywood's clapperboards.

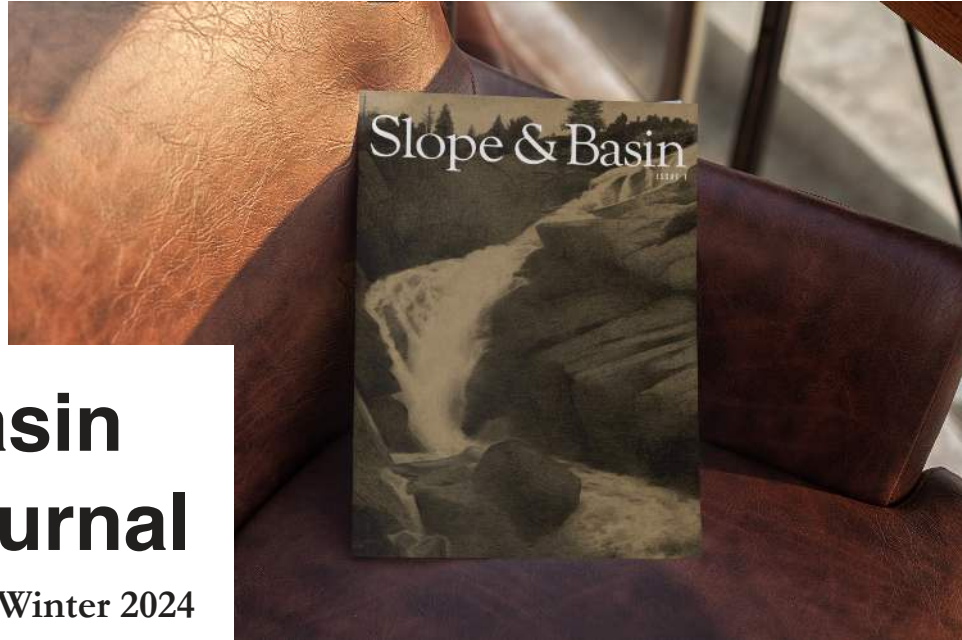
As our investigation draws to a close, we hope that visitors to the "Specters on Glass" exhibition will leave with, in Marya's words, "a more direct connection with the humanity and the solid reality" of the people who "built and inhabited this town," laying "the groundwork for what it is today."

Join us this August at the Switchboard Gallery (525 Main Street in Placerville) as we uncover the truth behind these shadowy negatives and the lives they once captured. Together, we'll rescue these specters from the realm of the mythic, raising their real, human memories from the dead.



Slope & Basin Literary Journal

Inaugural issue coming Winter 2024



Slope & Basin, a project of Arts and Culture El Dorado, is a regional literary journal publishing poetry and prose from writers based in El Dorado County. Its inaugural issue will be released in Winter 2024.

“As a professional, paying publication drawing work from every part of El Dorado County, we believe that this journal will be the first and only of its kind,” says Program Manager Jordan Hyatt-Miller.

“We know that there are incredible writers in this County, and we know that we are surrounded by natural wonders that inspire us and move us to write. But, until now, there has not been an outlet of this kind for our local writers.”

Slope & Basin takes its name from the Western Slope of the Sierra Nevada and the Lake Tahoe Basin, signifying the journal’s embrace of every community in the County and the capacity of the written word to reach across the “Granite Curtain”, connecting people who are separated geographically or culturally as if with an ampersand.

The name *Slope & Basin* also works in a different register, as an almost geometric abstraction of our region’s geography. The image it calls to mind is at once familiar and defamiliarizing, inviting us to adopt a new perspective of this place, to rethink our relation to its history and culture, and to reinvest this region, our home, with new meanings.

We are accepting submissions for the inaugural issue of *Slope & Basin* until October 15, 2024. Contributors of poems selected for publication will receive \$50; contributors of longer-form prose pieces will receive \$75.

Submission Guidelines:

- To submit, email your work to submissions@artsandcultureeldorado.org.
- You may submit up to three pieces (poems, prose fiction and non-fiction, or both) for consideration.
- Poems should be no longer than three pages, single-spaced. Prose works should be no longer than ten pages, single-spaced.
- Submissions should be formatted as Word documents or as PDFs, with a 12-point font size.
- In your email, please indicate if your submission has been previously published, and if so, where.
- Please include your name and mailing address in your email. Your mailing address must be within El Dorado County.



Celebrating **40** years

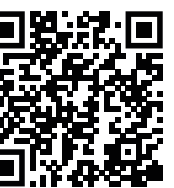
Save the Date for Our 40th Anniversary Celebration

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
DAVID GIRARD VINEYARDS

Arts and Culture El Dorado: Celebrating 40 Years of Enriching Our Community

As we approach a significant milestone — the 40th anniversary of Arts and Culture El Dorado — we reflect on our long-standing commitment to nurturing and preserving the rich tapestry of culture and the arts in El Dorado County. Our organization has been at the forefront of promoting, connecting, and empowering a diverse range of cultural expressions and programming focusing on youth, veterans, agriculture, Latinos, and Native Americans, and our Arts Incubator helps build capacity for emerging arts groups.

This year, as part of our celebration, we are embarking on an ambitious project to renovate two of our county's historical treasures: Confidence Hall and the Emigrant Jane Stuart Building. Constructed in the mid-19th century, these buildings stand as pillars of our community's heritage. Through your support, we can ensure that these buildings are not only preserved but also re-envisioned as vibrant centers of cultural activity and education within our Historic Cultural District.





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Arts and Culture El Dorado's mission to promote, connect, and empower arts and culture throughout the county is achieved by targeted programs and services, a vibrant gallery exhibition series, and a focus on initiatives which support and sustain the cultural life of the region.